

Opals and mixtapes by Jancys-Blue-Bayou

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Opals and mixtapes

"So, what do you and Nancy have planned for Valentine's Day?" His mom raises an eyebrow at him and smiles over the breakfast table as she asks the innocuous question that sends him into a slight panic.

What do you and Nancy have planned for Valentine's Day. What do you and Nancy have planned for Valentine's Day. *What do you and Nancy have planned for Valentine's Day.* Valentine's Day. Shit. What day is it today? The 7th. So it's in one week. Shit. He didn't even realize.

"Oh no..." his mom continues as she sees the look on his face. His panic must be etched across it.

"You forgot it?" Will asks from his seat.

"I didn't forget it! I just... never thought of it..."

"That is forgetting it," Will points out.

That's true. It's just... he's never had to think about it before. In kindergarten he, like the other kids in the class, made a card for his mother to give her on February 14th. But as he's gotten older he's not payed Valentine's Day any mind, he's never had cause too. It's just been a dumb commercial holiday. The only effect it's had on his life is that it's been one day of the year where the high school halls has been a veritable gauntlet of loveydovey teens exchanging gifts like the world and their relationship depended on it.

Now he is one of those teens, he realizes (perhaps too late). Honestly he still thinks it's a dumb commercial holiday. But he has no idea what *Nancy* thinks of it. Maybe she rolls her eyes at it. Or maybe she expects... something, from him. He does not know what. Oh god. He has no clue about this sort of stuff. Really has no clue about how to be... a boyfriend. Even if Nancy told him he's doing great when he voiced that sentiment before. But of course she says that, she is so kind and nice and sweet. He loves her, so much more than he can really wrap his head around even. She loves him too, she told him. Tells him, every day.

If she expects something of him for this day... he wants to give it to her, whatever it will be. Who cares if it's just a dumb commercial holiday, it can still be about them and... be romantic.

"I have to get her something," he says, making his mind up.

"Yes you do," his mom agrees.

"Do you know what you'll get her?" Will asks.

"No..." he answers, dejected, before getting up to put his dishes in the sink.

He does not know. What can he possibly get her that she'll like... no not just like, love? That she couldn't get for herself? That she hasn't already received in gifts... shit, she was with Steve last Valentine's Day... Steve is loaded with cash, he wonders what he got her, could've gotten her anything... he can... not. Shit. For Christmas, which he was deathly nervous about, he went for very personal gifts. Got her gun ammunition and a photo of Barb he'd taken in the beginning of the previous school year for the yearbook (from which he scrapped it of course) and held onto because he didn't know how she'd take seeing a photo of Barb before, but with Nancy getting some closure in getting justice for Barb he took a chance on that it would be appreciated now, which it was. But that was then, and he can't well get her anything like that now... not that Christmas screams "revolver ammo!" but somehow he feels Valentine's Day says it even less.

"Don't worry honey, we'll think of something. I'll help you look!" His mom clasps her hands together and looks at him excited and with hope in her eyes like she believes he actually won't screw this up.

"Thanks... ready bud?" He answers and looks at his little brother who nods and gets up so they can drive to school, stopping for Nancy (and Mike) on the way.

A knock on the door makes Will put down his crayon and get up from his desk. Mike's sick, Eleven's with Hopper, Lucas and Max are doing something that apparently is just for the two of them, and Dustin is

weirdly enough still hanging after Steve for some reason, so he's a bit at a loss on who's come over but still he's in a hurry to open, it got a bit lonely with his friends all preoccupied and Jonathan and mom out looking for a Valentine's gift for Nancy. He would've came with them if he had known none of his friends could hang out, though having time to draw is nice too.

"Hey Will!"

"Hi Nancy!" He looks at his brother's girlfriend, surprised. She beams at him. "Jonathan isn't here he-" he goes to explain, trying to think of a good lie to tell concerning his brother's whereabouts.

"Covering a shift I know, he told me," Nancy cuts in.

Oh, good that Jonathan had already covered that. And lucky for him Nancy cut him off, he was going to go with "has a dentist appointment". Which he now realizes would've been stupid, since it's Saturday. He's not good with lies.

"I lucked out he did actually... I needed him to be out for this..." Nancy continues.

"For what?" He asks.

"For me to be able to make my Valentine's Day gift for him! Can I come in?"

"Oh, of course," he hurries to step aside and let Nancy in while processing her words. "*Make* your Valentine's Day gift to him? Here?" He wonders.

"Yes! I've been stressed out, wracking my brain on what to get him, he's really hard to shop for you know, and this week I got an idea but then didn't know how I could execute it, until now. Look at this!"

Nancy has taken her coat off and opens a backpack she had slung over her shoulder earlier and shows him its contents. There's a couple of records in there and a whole heap of mix tapes.

"What are those?"

"All the mixtapes he's made me."

Wow. Jonathan's made him a lot of mixtapes through the years, but he seems to have made double the amount for Nancy just in a few months (at least he assumes he didn't make her mixtapes before November when the Gate closed and his brother got a girlfriend). Not that he's jealous, he's just happy his brother has Nancy now. He's never seen his brother happier than he's been these last few months.

"Music means so much to him and I love how he always shares it with me, what he likes, what's important to him and close to him so I thought... I should make him one! With songs that makes me think of him. What do you think?" Nancy explains her idea to him.

"That's a really good idea," he nods.

"Right? I think it can be good... only problem is I can't record off my stereo and my dad's record player doesn't have a cassette deck and it's broken anyway, and so I've come to take advantage of Jonathan's."

"Oh, okay. Do you know how to make mix tapes?" He asks.

"Technically no, but I've observed him doing it. Do you?"

"I think so?"

"Cool, can you help me out? Together we should manage it right?"

"Sure!"

"But mom, jewelry is expensive..." he quietly protests as his mom steers him to the store he's walked past many times without ever entering.

"Oh come on sweetie, I'm not saying buy her a big ol' diamond, but there are more affordable things. I think, haven't been in here for... well a long time. Anyway. Besides this is Hawkins, not exactly Tiffany's on Fifth Avenue. You said you wanted to get her something pretty and nice."

He did say that, so he follows his mom into the store. Inside there's

display cases filled with all sorts of jewelry and he feels out of place in the fancy store with impeccably clean aisles and nice furnishings. He knows this isn't exactly his mom's scene either, but she seems much more confident than him, maybe it's her determination and attitude of not taking any crap no matter what people think of them. He doesn't know where to even start, he's a lousy shopper. He thinks, at least. It's kind of hard to tell because it's not like he's had much experience shopping for stuff other than groceries, and clothes when he's outgrown everything and definitely needs something new. Other than that it's pretty much just the record store that he's frequented. A lot of times just browsing without buying anything. He's felt at home there. Not like here, he doesn't know where to look or what to look for. A necklace? A bracelet? A ring? What do you give Nancy Wheeler?

His mom seems to have an idea though, or at least takes initiative by striding right up to the nearest display case and starting to look. He quickly follows her.

"See, not everything is super pricey just because it's jewelry, there's some stuff you can afford," she says as he joins her in looking at the display showcasing a bunch of different rings that does fall within his budget. He has some money saved up and when he told his mom how much she insisted on slipping another five dollar bill into his hand which he's planning to give her back or at least put away and use for groceries instead. He appreciates the gesture but she shouldn't put money on this it's for him to get Nancy a gift, his mom's hard-earned money should go to other things.

"Yeah... I'm not sure about a ring though like doesn't a ring seem a bit... um... well I don't know how she'd take it..."

"Sweetie there's more rings than just for engagements and marriage," his mom chuckles. "I'm not suggesting that. I definitely think you should wait until after high school before you ask her to marry you," she continues with a smile.

"Mom..." he groans. "We've only been-" he starts but she cuts him off.

"Yeah yeah I know I know you've only been dating for a couple of months, just like you've only saved each others lives and the whole

world a couple of times," she grins. "And you only spend just about every day and night together-"

"Night?! You know about-" he cuts her off, horrified.

"Yes Jonathan, you two are not as sneaky as you think," his mom smirks at him.

"Oh God..."

"I haven't said anything because I really don't mind, you know. I had been thinking about this stuff before, of what I would do when you got a girlfriend. I thought of all the rules my mother had for me when I was your age and how I hated it and how stupid it was because it wasn't like I couldn't just go out and see-"

"Mom..."

"Right, not important, anyway point is you are responsible and I trust you, and Nancy. So I don't see any harm in you two spending the nights together. Like everything you can do at night you can just as well do during the day so-"

"Mom!"

"Right, right. I'm just saying, you don't have to have Nancy sneak out in the morning or get in at 6 AM and pretend you just got up early. However much I do enjoy your performances at those occasions."

"Okay I... Okay. Thanks. Can we *please* talk about something else?" He tries, desperate to change the topic of the conversation.

"Sure, so if not a ring then what do you have in mind for Nancy?"

"I don't know um... what girls want um... a necklace maybe?"

"Well, I'm sure she'd love *anything* from you but yes a necklace is a good idea! Let's see..."

His mom looks up and around the store to see where they can find necklaces. Just then someone comes up from behind and gets their attention.

"Well hello there!" A cheery voice calls out.

"Oh, hello Claudia! I didn't know you worked here," his mom greets Dustin's mother.

"Hello Mrs. Henderson," he greets.

"How lovely to see you two! And yes oh it's been awhile since we talked hasn't it? It's been a few months, I was laid off at the old place but my sister's husband owns this place and had an opening," Mrs. Henderson explains.

"Oh well that's great, that it worked out like that," his mom smiles and he nods.

"It really is, I'm very happy. Well, so what brings you in today? Oh, is it something for a certain someone for the special day coming up?" Mrs. Henderson is practically beaming at him as she says that last part and he blushes.

"Yes Jonathan's in the market for a nice necklace to give to Nancy, maybe you can help?" His mom butts in.

"Oh how exciting! Oh yes follow me right this way, we have a lot of really lovely ones. Do you have an idea of what exactly?"

"Er... no I...um..." He fumbles.

"Well no worries, you can just have a look here for a start you see, I think some of these may be of interest, they're classic and stylish you see, elegant and not so tawdry," Mrs. Henderson continues without missing a beat and shows them a display with simple but elegant necklaces, most of them in his price range.

"Oh these are nice," his mom coos.

"Yes they are," he mumbles in agreement, looking over the selection, trying to find anything that could be worthy of Nancy. The cheapest ones are simple heart-shaped designs in gold and silver which feels too simple, or ordinary. The most expensive ones here have diamonds. Those look great but is way above what he can afford.

"See anything you like?" Mrs. Henderson asks.

He may have. There's several ones of similar designs with different gems attached. His eyes have been drawn to one with a light blueish greenish, almost turquoise, gem.

"How about that one?" He asks unsure, pointing it out to his mom and Mrs. Henderson.

"Oh that's lovely," his mom says.

Mrs. Henderson gets it out of the display case and holds it up for them to take a closer look.

"It really is," she chimes in. "Is she an October birthday?"

"Huh? Yes she is how'd you- but this is for Valentine's Day not-" He's very confused.

"Oh I just meant, it's an opal. It's her birthstone then."

"What's a birthstone?" He asks, more confused.

"Oh," Mrs. Henderson looks surprised for a second, like she wasn't ready for someone to have that gap in their knowledge. "Well for every month of the year there's a different gemstone symbolizing that month, and it's a person's birthstone if they're born then. So people often give necklaces like these as a gift to someone for that."

"Oh. I just thought, it'd go with her eyes so..."

"Oh! Well it would, she has gorgeous eyes doesn't she? And how lucky are you then, the birthstone is just an added bonus!"

"Right..."

"It really looks great honey. You're right, it goes with her eyes. She'd look lovely wearing it. I'm sure she'd love it," his mom says.

"Well I want to set the tone right away, so we'll start with this," she tells Will and puts on *Time After Time* which will be the first song on

the mixtape.

"What's this?" He asks and she realizes that having Jonathan Byers as his chief influence regarding music probably means Will doesn't have great knowledge of pop hits. She might have to remedy that.

"Cyndi Lauper," she tells him.

"I like it. What do you mean with setting the tone?"

"Well it makes me think of him. Us," she explains, timely enough just before they reach the chorus.

If you're lost, you can look and you will find me

Time after time

If you fall, I will catch you, I'll be waiting

Time after time

If you're lost, you can look and you will find me

Time after time

If you fall, I will catch you, I'll be waiting

Time after time

Will nods. She explains further.

"It's one of my favorite songs. I first heard it when- well have you heard *Girls Just Want to Have Fun*?"

"I think I heard it at the Snow Ball. All the girls were dancing to it."

"Oh that's right! That was cute. Well, that was her first single and I heard it on the radio last fall. I mean not this fall but the one before that. Um, like two months before everything happened uh... it must have been September. Me and Barb played it all the time... then the album came out in October right in time for my birthday and um, Barb got it for me. We listened to it all the time until..." she trails off. It's still so weird and hard to talk about. With Will no less, with

everything he's gone through, she's not sure how comfortable he is talking about any of that time at all.

"Sorry," he offers and looks fine though. "It's a great song," he adds.

"Thanks. I listened to it a lot, over and over last year before we were even um... I had to stop because it just made me think of him when we weren't... but then now since I've... listened to it a lot again and yeah it just... makes me think of him. I think it's about us. Sorry that's so cheesy and sappy but-"

"It's not cheesy it's romantic," Will shrugs, slight blush on his cheeks.

"Right, anyway... well you've at least heard of Madonna right?" She continues and picks up the next record.

"Yes," Will smiles and rolls his eyes to signal that he's not completely clueless regarding pop music.

"So, what else do you have planned?" His mom asks as they make their way out of the store after saying goodbye to Mrs. Henderson who couldn't stop talking about what a cute couple he and Nancy apparently makes.

"I don't know I... I should take her out for dinner right? Somewhere uh, nice... but I don't know any nice places um... and you know, money..."

"Well, may I come with a suggestion?"

"Yes?"

"You are a catch Jonathan-"

"Mom..."

"- you are handsome and charming and nice-"

"Mom... where's the suggestion?"

"I'm getting to it! And funny and smart and brave. These are all great

qualities that makes you the most special amazing guy in the world, and I'm sure Nancy agrees with me."

"Mom..."

"But you have another very special quality that makes you stand out even more from all the other hapless guys around: you're a great cook, Jonathan."

"I'm okay, mom."

"No, you're great. You're really great in the kitchen. I think so and Will thinks so and I know Nancy thinks so too. She's not faking all those yummy noises and 'oh my god Jonathan this is great' every time she's over for dinner. And she's a girl who was raised by Karen Wheeler who feeds her family *good*, just like you by the way. So, going out to dinner is nice and all but do you know what's even more romantic for a girl? When a guy cooks you a great dinner himself. I think you should cook for Nancy yourself. Make it romantic, with candles and stuff you know. I guarantee you she'll be like putty in your hands."

"Putty in my hands?"

"I mean, you know... I'm just saying, she'll love it and it will be very sweet and romantic!"

"Right... I mean..."

"Will and I will be out of the house so you'll have the place for yourselves."

"... okay... um... yeah that sounds... like a plan. But oh god what should I cook her?"

"Well, her favorite, obviously. Come on son."

After having explained to Will that *Like a Virgin* isn't literal but more... metaphorical, *Follow Me* by Blondie has also been added to the tape. Will real digs Blondie and says he's sure Jonathan will like them too. Which makes her weirdly happy, Blondie is her favorite

band. It's not like it's the end of the world if Jonathan doesn't like them but... it sure would be nice if he did. And she thinks Will is probably right, he knows his brother's tastes very good of course and even she knows that though he's generally more inclined to punk he's not averse to new wave so.

"Hey there's a New Order song that he's played for me that needs to be on the tape, help me dig through his records," she requests and starts to look through all the records and tapes Jonathan's got by his record player.

"Sure, what song?" Will asks.

"I forget the name of it... it goes like..." she starts to hum the tune but Will looks on confused. "And then it goes like 'Up down turn around please don't let me hit the ground' and then later like 'I've never met anyone quite like you before' um..."

"Uh... um... wait, *Temptation*?" Will suggests.

"Oh, maybe I'm not sure about the title really..."

"I think he has the single wait... here it is," Will digs out a record and soon well-familiar tones fill the room.

"Yeah that's it, awesome! Thanks."

"No, problem. I love them. New Order, and Joy Division before that. He has a lot of their stuff. He really likes them."

"Yeah I like them too."

"So what's special about this song?"

"Oh it was playing in the car after our first like, real date, when we found a place to stop and be together like that for the first time since... uh I mean..." she drastically cuts herself off as Will's eyes bulge out and she realizes she almost started to tell Jonathan's little brother about the second time she and Jonathan had sex. "Er, I mean it just reminds me of our first official date and it's a nice song for a nice time um."

"It is a nice song," Will nods, trying to move past the awkwardness. In an effort to do the same she drastically changes the topic.

"So uh, Mike's freaking out about what to do for El and his first Valentine's Day. I've had to help him all week because he's clueless about what to do."

"Tell me about it, it's all he talks about now. It's kind of annoying," Will rolls his eyes but smirks. "Lucas too, about Max. And Dustin is desperate to impress some girl in time for it."

"Oh, who?"

"Just any girl I think, no one in particular. Suddenly everyone is girl crazy. I don't get it."

"Oh, huh. I tried to talk to him at the Snow Ball hmpf... he should just relax a little. But yeah I can see how that's annoying. But oh speaking of the Snow Ball, how about you? What ever happened with that cute girl you were dancing with?"

"Oh uh... we're just friends. We sit next to each other in Math. To be honest I think she just wanted to dance with anyone and thought I was as good as any..."

"Aw, don't say that maybe she likes you for real."

"I don't know. I don't mind, I don't really like her all that much... I mean she's alright, but it's not like... that. I don't know. I don't really care about girls all that much... I mean uh, yet or like... I don't know," Will stumbles over his words and she gathers it's not something he really wants to talk about so he decides to back off. To be honest his reaction kind of reminds her of how Barb used to react to talk about boys at that age. Barb was never interested in boys... She decides to just leave it.

"Oh well that's no big deal. I mean you guys are just in eighth grade not like you should be in a hurry, you're not even out of middle school yet. It's just funny to me how Mike acts now, I never thought he of all people would get a girlfriend already in middle school. Biggest dork in the world," she smiles.

"Sure that's not me?" Will rolls his eyes and grins.

"No way, you've always added the cool factor to your little group," she insists.

"What cool factor?" Will questions.

"The cool artist one!" She grins.

Will laughs and shakes his head.

"Anyway, speaking of cool artists, this may also be cheesy but I'm going to put *"Heroes"* on the tape just because," she continues and reaches out to flip through Jonathan's David Bowie records.

"Because you two are..." she can just hear Will mumble under his breath and it makes her grin but when she looks at him he looks down and pretends to be reading the liner notes of the New Order record so she turns back to the Bowie pile with a smile.

Well, Jonathan's definitely got something planned. When he picked her up for school he mumbled a "Happy Valentine's Day" and nervously asked her if she is free tonight. Normally he's not nervous to ask her that. She's very intrigued by this. Especially when he asks if she can borrow her mom's car and come over at 7 because "I mean I'd love to pick you up but I have to um... uh... prepare...something."

She could, so here she is now, pulling up in the Byers driveway a little before 7. Joyce's Pinto is gone, she notices. Jonathan was very tightlipped about tonight, not letting any information slip no matter what she tried. Not even when she started making out with him in the darkroom while asking him about it did he lose enough focus to spill the beans. She's glad he didn't though, if antsy to see what he's got planned. Whatever it is she's sure it will be amazing. It's not like Valentine's Day is a huge deal to her. She had to kind of roll her eyes at some of the stuff she witnessed at school today. She overheard Josie raving to Vicky and Leslie about how Greg apparently is the perfect boyfriend and so romantic because he surprised her with roses and chocolates in a grand gesture by her locker in front of everyone. When just last week in the same spot Josie very publicly

dumped Greg because he had kissed Kayla at Drew's house party over the weekend.

She's all for romance, but some guys, like Greg, seems to take Valentine's Day as the one day a year they have to be romantic and then the other 364 days they can do whatever as long as they make up for it on February 14th. She's been with Jonathan for three and a half months now and he's been romantic... every day, with her. Just all the time, in the little things. It's in the little things for her, everything doesn't have to be a grand gesture to be romantic. Though something grand today she wouldn't be averse too... just not in public, she's thankful he's like her in that he's more private than public about that stuff. Last year for Valentine's Day Steve had been waiting for her by her locker with a huge bouquet of roses and a huge heart-shaped box of chocolates and while she appreciates the gesture, having the whole hallway full of people staring at her waiting for her move was mortifying. Ever since that November her and Steve's relationship had been the talk of the hallways. Until they got back together everyone stared at her and whispered as she walked down the hallways alone, then when she went back to Steve she could feel everyone staring at them like they were expecting more drama any second. It died down over the months but at that point in February her and Steve's relationship... drama, was still the juiciest gossip at Hawkins High.

Plus that morning hadn't been her best. She had seen Barb's parents the night before which had brought up all the feelings she was trying to bury right up to the forefront from where they were bubbling just under the surface, and she cried all night and didn't get any sleep and felt like a wreck as she fixed herself up and dragged herself to school only to be greeted with that. With a boyfriend waiting for her looking expectantly at her and a hallway full of people all also looking at her expecting something. She really could've done without that. Her first instinct had been to turn around and bolt, get away from all the people and expectations and *facades she had built up*, but of course she didn't. She did what everyone expected of her, she walked up to Steve and called him an idiot in a sweet voice and kissed him and accepted the flowers and chocolates.

It took until Halloween until her facades crumbled and she defied

everyone's — most of all her own — expectations and did what she truly sought after. Getting justice and getting Jonathan. He's many things, brave and strong and sweet and funny and kind and nice and smart, and he's also not showy and private but genuine with his emotions. No grand public gestures today, just as always sweet Jonathan by her side the whole day, with the mysterious promise of something more tonight, privately. She can't wait, so she hurries her step as she makes her way up to the porch with the mixtape in her coat pocket.

He realizes he must have checked the oven nine times in the last thirty seconds but he checks it again. Almost ready. Almost. It has to be perfect. He glances at the clock on the wall. Still 6:53 like the last seventeen times he looked. He walks over to the dining room table. It all looks nice right? It's nice but not too over the top, he hopes. Like he's trying but not like... trying too hard. Can he try too hard with Nancy? Should he light the candles now? No, after she's here, right? Yeah, definitely. Crap, a lighter. Or matches. He forgot. He rushes back into the kitchen and rummages through a drawer and finds a lighter. Same one they used to set fire to a monster once, he realizes as he puts it in his pocket. Should he rethink the shirt?

The sound of a car coming into the driveway jolts him out of his thought. Crap, he hopes he went with the right shirt, after changing four times. Too late to change again now. He stands ready by the door as he hears her closing a car door outside. Should he open it already? Or let her knock? Should he maybe wait a second before opening it so to not give away that he's standing here waiting? Crap! The food! He runs back into the kitchen Instead and looks in the oven again. Yep, ready now. Where's the damn oven mitts? There. He hurries to carry the dish out to the dining room. Just as he sets it down on the table, near the bottle of wine he got Eric to go in and buy for him, there's the knock on the door. He hurries towards it, halfway there realizing he should probably lose the oven mitts, throwing them into the kitchen.

"Hey..."

"Hi!"

Wow he looks so dreamy. He's wearing his best shirt (at least the one that's her favorite on him. It really brings out his eyes) and smiling at her in that way that makes her heart skip beats.

"You look great," he tells her, taking her in. It makes her blush, what he says and how he looks at her.

"Thanks. You too. My favorite on you," she tells him and reaches out to place her fingers to the collar of his shirt as she steps forward to kiss him. His lips are soft and nice. They always are. Even when they're a bit chapped from her kissing him throughout a whole night they somehow remain soft even after that.

"Come in," he smiles at her when they break apart and he steps aside to let her in.

He takes her coat and she takes in the- oh, is it...?

"It smells wonderful Jonathan, it smells like-" she starts.

"Yeah," he blushes and nods and smiles. "I know it's your favorite so... I wanted to do something nice, tonight um... so I thought we could uh, have dinner... here. Just the two of us, I mean. My mom and Will aren't home. So it'll be just us..."

"That sounds lovely," she beams at him.

She takes his hand and he leads her to the dining room. There he hurries up to the table to light two candles while she's left standing looking in awe at him and his efforts.

"You did all this for me?"

"I... yeah... I hope you like it I just wanted to make-"

He probably had many more sweet things to say but she can't contain herself she just has to kiss him because he's so sweet and cute and dreamy. Has to kiss him a lot actually, so much so she presses him up against the wall and suddenly they find themselves in a little make out session.

"I love it," she halts to tell him.

"We haven't gotten to the food yet," he points out with a shy smile after he's caught his breath.

"Your point being?" She grins. "This is so sweet Jonathan. I love it already."

Well, so far this has gone better than he could have hoped for. She made out with him before dinner even. And again after. And has told him over and over how he's apparently the sweetest and cutest in the world (which he definitely disagrees with, because clearly that's her *just look at her*) and that the evening's been perfect. But now the moment of truth is here. This part he's more nervous about than anything.

"I got something for you," he tells her.

"Wait, there's *more*?" She looks surprised.

"Yeah this was just... um, well I want to give you something also."

"You're unbelievable," she grins and shakes her head. Then looks at him. "I have something for you too. Wait here."

She gets up, goes over to him and kisses him and then hurries out of the room to get it, whatever it is. He never thought about her getting him something. Now he's very excited about that.

Nancy quickly returns, hiding her hands behind her back. Looking like she's about to burst from excitement.

"Can I go first?" She asks.

"Sure," he says while getting up from his chair.

"So... I made you this," she says and reveals a mixtape. He feels his jaw drop a little and hopes he doesn't look like a total dork as he continues to listen to her. "I've played you some of my stuff before but you share so much of the music you love with me, and I know how important it is to you... it's part of you, so it means a lot that you do, like all the tapes you make me, I love them and I wanted to make you one with music that's important to me because it... well,

this is all made up of songs that makes me think of you... us... in different ways... which makes them very special to me... um... I hope you like it," she finishes and hands him the tape.

"This is amazing... thank you," he tells her as he stares transfixed at the tape in his hands, scanning the track list written in Nancy's beautiful handwriting. This is his favorite mixtape ever, he knows already. "Thank you so much... I love it..."

"You haven't listened to it yet," she notes.

"Your point being?" He mirrors her from earlier and it makes her laugh. "I love it already. And I can't wait to listen to it. Thank you."

"You're welcome," she blushes before kissing him.

"So... I got you this. I hope you like it. If not that's okay um," he tells her and fishes the box with the necklace in it out of his shirt pocket.

"I will don't sell yourself short," she starts. When she sees the jewelry box she quiets. He hands it to her and she takes it in her nimble hands. She flips the lid open and gasps. "Oh my god Jonathan..." she takes the necklace out and holds it in her hands, admiring it as she drops the box on the floor. "This is beautiful oh my god... I love it thank you so much oh my... oh my god you got me this and did all this tonight and I just made you a mixtape? Oh god I feel so-"

"Just a mixtape? This is amazing Nancy, it means so much to me that you made this for me, that you want to share this with me... and I... wait you really love it?"

"Yes oh my god Jonathan, it's beautiful! Oh my god it's an opal, isn't it? That's my birthstone this is so sweet..."

"I know... okay, I didn't know that at first, I found that out... I just thought, well it matches your eyes and so I thought it was really pretty because... well, your eyes... are... um..."

"God that's even sweeter... I... wait hold on..."

Nancy quickly takes off the necklace she's wearing, the nice ballet slippers one she always wears. Which she told him her parents got

her for Christmas when she was 11 and still doing ballet, and which she kept wearing as a kind of memento of that time even after her ballerina days were over. She obviously loves that necklace, which gave him second thoughts about the necklace he got her after he bought it but since he'd paid for it and all he felt he should just go with it even with the doubts. Her reaction has erased those now.

"Help me put it on," she asks and hands the necklace to him and turns around with her back toward him and sweeps her hair out of the way.

"S-sure..."

He undoes the clasp and gently puts the necklace on her. When he's clasped it again she quickly turns around and looks right at him, beaming with her whole face.

"So how do I look?"

"Beautiful..." he manages to get out. She's breathtaking.

She kisses him again and takes his breath away.

"I love you so much, you know," she tells him.

"I love you too."

"I still feel bad you did all this and got me this and I just made you a mixtape..." she tells him, hands locked behind his neck.

"It means the world to me though. And this is just... I just wanted to give you something nice... and have a nice night with you..."

"It's been the best night. Still I should have gotten you more..."

"Well, I don't really want much more than what I've got right now," he tell her and pointedly holds her closer.

"Aw... well still, your birthday's coming up soon...ish. And I'm going all out. Think I'll throw you a parade. Buy you your own island or something. Get the President to make it a national holiday," she smiles.

"Hey hey hey. *Our* own island I could get behind," he smirks. She giggles.

"Right? Well for now I think... a house to ourselves does just fine..." she says and gives him a look.

"Happy Valentine's Day," he tells her and picks her up. She reciprocates the sentiment and giggles as she locks her arms and legs around him while he heads straight to his room.